



## **State of Connecticut**

### **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL**

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**MEMBER**  
**APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE**  
**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

## **Testimony**

### **In support of H.B. 5952 An Act Reducing Fraud And Abuse Of The Motor Vehicle Handicap Permit System**

**Transportation Committee**  
**Monday, February 14, 2011**

Dear Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrera, Senator Boucher, Representative Scribner and fellow members of the Transportation Committee:

I am writing to urge thoughtful consideration of HB 5952, An Act Reducing Fraud and Abuse of the Motor Vehicle Handicap Permit System.

The bill proposes requiring handicap parking permits to include photos of permit holders.

I introduced this bill following conversations with law enforcement officers in my district who felt that they needed additional tools to help them prove unlawful use of parking spots. They often suspect violations, but don't pursue them because they have no clear way to substantiate them, and in their view, photos on the permits would help -- if not in all cases, at least in many.

I do not have formal statistical evidence of the frequency of unlawful use of handicap parking spots. Law enforcement officers in Norwalk are, however, very concerned that it happens often. Numerous citizens have also written to me to express their frustration about instances of abuse they believe they have witnessed and to voice their support of the bill.

There are precedents for this type of legislation. According to the Office of Legislative Research, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and South Carolina all require photos on handicap permits.

A concern that I share with several citizens who have written to me is privacy. Many permit holders may not feel comfortable having their photos visible in the windshields of their cars. Massachusetts and New Mexico have resolved this by providing covers or flaps to conceal the photos; permit holders in those states are required to show their photos only when asked by a law enforcement officer. This issue does not appear complicated to address, and I would support adding such a provision to this bill.

I also believe that because of their disabilities, permit holders should not be unduly inconvenienced by the obligation to have their photos taken, and a way should be found to ensure that they can do so as easily as possible.

This proposed bill can help to address an issue that is important for both holders of legitimate handicap parking permits and law enforcement officers. Were it to facilitate law enforcement, implementing the photo requirement would be a successful measure; if it deterred potential violators, it would be even more successful. To assess effectiveness properly, it would be useful to require benchmarking of the number of documented violations before and at specified intervals after implementation of the bill.

Ease of access to all types of destinations is crucial for individuals with disabilities every day, every time they travel from one place to another. To carry out their daily activities, they need the parking spots that are reserved for their use. I respectfully urge the chairs and my fellow members of the Transportation Committee to give the bill your serious consideration and support.